

New week, new U.S. sanctions: What will become of the Port of Mariel?



Completed in 2014, the Port of Mariel is the most modern and efficient in the country
(Source: [ZED Mariel](#))

The U.S. government [imposed sanctions on Monday](#) on ten Cuban institutions and companies—including the Ministry of Tourism, the shipping company GEMAR, and the foreign trade group GECOMEX.

According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, companies that have contracts with the sanctioned entities have until August 12 to settle them without risking sanctions themselves. The legal basis for this is Executive Order 14404, which U.S. President Donald Trump [signed on May 1, 2026](#) and which allows Washington to freeze U.S. assets belonging to individuals or organizations that support the Cuban government or economy. The order also increases pressure on banks that cooperate with Cuban authorities.

The Port of Mariel: A Cat-and-Mouse Game?

Particularly noteworthy is the sanctioning of the GEMAR corporate group, which is part of the Ministry of Transportation. The strategically important [Mariel Container Port](#) was previously owned by the Cuban military holding company GAESA, which is already subject to sanctions. Completed in 2014 with Brazilian assistance, it is the country's largest and most efficient port, with a capacity of 822,000 [TEU](#); the terminal also has a direct rail connection to Havana, located 40 kilometers to the east.

To enable international shipping companies to continue calling at Mariel without risking secondary sanctions, Cuba had [according to media reports](#) transferred the port to GEMAR. Now GEMAR has also ended up on the sanctions list. The question that arises is: Will Cuba

sell Mariel to another company again—and who will be faster in the future: Havana in restructuring or Washington in imposing sanctions?

The sanctioning of the Ministry of Tourism could also pose obstacles to the recovery of this struggling sector. However, given the already low number of visitors, the concrete impact is likely to be limited. In addition, the current list includes several companies, military units, and the veterans' organization ACRC, which brings together not only fighters from the 1959 Revolution but also veterans of Cuban missions in Angola and Ethiopia.

The U.S. State Department stated that the measures were aimed at targeting the Cuban state's "sources of funding." However, the composition of the list makes it clear that Rubio is slowly running out of options, since virtually all relevant companies and institutions have already been sanctioned, and Cuba—as in the case of Mariel—is devising countermeasures that must then be manually added to the list.

Cuba Calls It “Collective Punishment”

During a UN debate last week, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla described the sanctions as “an act of collective punishment” and “a systematic violation of the human rights of an entire people.”

In response to the latest round of sanctions, [Rodríguez stated](#) that the U.S. government is waging “war against the Cuban people, their living conditions, and their livelihoods.” U.S. sanctions caused \$8 billion in damage between March 2025 and February 2026—in addition to the extreme effects of the fuel blockade, according to Rodríguez. ([Cubaheute](#))